

Message Text

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EXDIS

CORRECTED COPY (TEXT)

E. O. 11652: NGDS

TAGS: PFRO, IN, US

SUBJECT: INDIAN STATEMENTS ON US ARMS POLICY DECISION

1. THE RECKLESSNESS WHICH KAUL RUSHED INTO A PRESS CONFERENCE HAS NOT BEEN DUPLICATED IN NEW DELHI. ALTHOUGH I INFORMED THE GOI OF OUR NEW POLICY ON FEBRUARY 20, UNTIL THIS AFTERNOON THERE HAD BEEN NO PUBLIC GOI REACTION, EVEN ON A BACKGROUND BASIS. THE EXTERNAL AFFAIRS MINISTRY HAD PLANNED A BACKGROUND BRIEFING YESTERDAY AFTERNOON BUT THEN CHANGED ITS PLAN IN FAVOR OF AWAITING A STATEMENT BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER IN PARLIAMENT. THAT STATEMENT WAS MADE THIS AFTERNOON (FEBRUARY 25) AFTER BEING CONSIDERED BY A MEETING OF THE CABINET.

2. THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S STATEMENT (TRANSMITTED SEPTEL) INCLUDES ALL OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE INDIAN POSITION: SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES OF THE US POLICY FOR HOPES FOR PEACE AND FOR MORE MATURE RELATIONS WITH THE US; EFFECT ON THE PROCESS OF RECONCILIATION; USE OF US ARMS ON THREE PREVIOUS OCCASIONS AGAINST INDIA; AND INDIA'S STRONG DISAPPOINTMENT AND SENSE OF DEEP REGRET AT THE US DECISION. THE GOVERNMENT WAS ABLE TO PREVENT DEBATE ON CHAVAN'S STATEMENT IN THE LOWER HOUSE BUT IN THE RAJYA SABHA THE MINISTER HAD TO ANSWER A BARRAGE OF QUESTIONS FROM THE OPPOSITION, PARTICULARLY THE

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COMMUNISTS, AND THIS BROUGHT FURTHER COMMENTS FROM CHAVAN.

SPEAKING OF US CRIMINAL ACTS, VILLAINY AND HYPOCRISY, A COMMUNIST ASKED THE MINISTER ABOUT THE ASSURANCES GIVEN BY THE SECRETARY IN OCTOBER. CHAVAN REPLIED THAT "IN OUR JUDGMENT" THE US ACTION IS NOT CONSISTENT WITH THAT ASSURANCE, BUT THEN REMARKED THAT "IN ALL FAIRNESS" HE HAD TO SAY THAT THE US DID NOT AGREE WITH THAT VIEW. (CHAVAN WAS STUCK WITH HIS JUDGMENT ON ASSURANCES SINCE HE HAD COMMITTED HIMSELF TO IT IN A PREVIOUS STATEMENT IN THE PARLIAMENT.) AMBASSADOR T.N. KAUL WAS STRENUOUSLY ATTACKED FOR HIS EARLIER PRO-US STATEMENTS AND DEMANDS WERE MADE FOR HIS RECALL. CHAVAN DEFENDED HIM, SAYING HE WAS ACTING UNDER INSTRUCTIONS AND CALLED ATTENTION TO WHAT THE AMBASSADOR HAD SAID IN WASHINGTON YESTERDAY. ASKED BY SEVERAL MEMBERS TO CANCEL HIS TRIP TO THE US, CHAVAN ANSWERED ONLY, "IN VIEW OF THIS WE WILL CERTAINLY HAVE TO CONSIDER IT." THERE WERE ALSO CALLS FOR INDIA TO REFUSE THE US OFFER OF CONCESSIONAL WHEAT. CHAVAN'S RESPONSE WAS THAT THESE WERE TWO SEPARATE QUESTIONS, THAT INDIA WAS BOTH BUYING FOOD FROM THE US AND TRYING TO ARRANGE CONCESSIONAL FINANCING. CHAVAN ALSO SAID THAT EVERY EFFORT WOULD BE MADE TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE US BUT NOTHING WOULD BE DONE WHICH WENT AGAINST THE NATINAL INTEREST.

3. BUT THE CHAVAN STATEMENT AVOIDED MOST OF THE RHETORIC AND EXTREME ELEMENTS OF THAT BY AMBASSADOR KAUL. FOR EXAMPLE, THERE WAS NOTHING ON THE REDUCTION OF THE CREDIBILITY OF US ASSURANCES, ABOUT A US POLICY BASED UPON BALANCE OF POWER OR CONCERNING US INVOLVEMENT OF THE SUBCONTINENT IN GREAT POWER MILITARY ALLIANCES AND RIVALRIES. CHAVAN'S STATEMENT SEEMED TO US TO BE ABOUT WHAT HE HAD TO SAY, GIVEN HIS PREVIOUS STATEMENTS AND THE POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS OF THE PARLIAMENT ON THIS EMOTIONAL ISSUE. THERE WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE EROSIONS FROM THIS POSITION AS DEBATE BRINGS OUT ADDITIONAL COMMENT. ALSO WE HEAR THAT ON THURSDAY THERE IS TO BE A "NATIONAL SEMINAR" OF PARLIAMENTARIANS ON SUCH MATTERS AS US ARMS AID AND THE INDIAN OCEAN WHICH WILL BE ADDRESSED BY THE FOREIGN MINISTER.

4. SINCE INDIAN OFFICIALS WERE ENGAGED FOR MOST OF THE DAY IN PREPARATION FOR THE GOI POSITION, I WAS UNABLE TO CARRY OUT THE DEPARTMENT'S INSTRUCTION ON THE KAUL PRESS

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CONFERENCE UNTIL AFTER CHAVAN HAD MADE HIS STATEMENT. I FINALLY REACHED TEJA, JOINT SECRETARY FOR THE AMERICAS, AND INFORMED HIM OF OUR PROTEST REGARDING KAUL'S INTEMPERATE LANGUAGE, CALLING ATTENTION TO THE PHRASE ABOUT REDUCTION

OF THE CREDIBILITY OF US ASSURANCES. I TOLD HIM THIS MISREPRESENTED US POLICY AND RECALLED THE REMARKS IN THIS REGARD WHICH I HAD MADE TO KEWAL SINGH (TEJA HAD BEEN PRESENT

AT BOTH MEETINGS). AFTER REVIEWING THE STATEMENT, TEJA SOUGHT TO JUSTIFY IT AS REFLECTING THE VIEWS OF THE GOI, WHILE REMARKING THAT THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S LANGUAGE HAD BEEN MORE RESTRAINED BECAUSE IT REPRESENTED A FORMAL PRESENTATION OF GOVERNMENTAL VIEW IN THE PARLIAMENT.

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